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ABSTRACT

This book explores the U.S. gang problem, based on the author's 35 years of experience as a high school and junior high school teacher, principal, and community organizer in Oakland and Los Angeles (California). Chapters discuss the subculture of gang worlds, reasons why youth are attracted to gangs, how educators can reach out to students, the hold that gangs have on members, the role of important others in adolescent development, classroom climate, the importance of the learning climate in gang membership attraction, the importance of an atmosphere of safety to discourage gang formation, and the role of community school settings. Gangs are the result of urban decay, poverty, discrimination, family disorganization, cultural differences, social class resentments, and dislocation. Gang members generally are children growing up in neighborhoods where youth gangs are rampant, and where turf wars, trade wars, drugs, homeless children, guns, and cynical values prevail. Many gang members are moved by their desires to overcome the feared experience of personal failure, and others join gangs through intimidation and desire for social status. Gangs are emerging into powerful economic, political, and quasi-military forces, with the ability to corrupt judges, police officers, legitimate businesses, family life, and schools. Schools can reduce the attractiveness of gangs by promoting the "bonding" of students to teachers, classrooms, schools, and their communities while preparing students with the knowledge, skills, and values for making healthy choices. (Contains 70 references.) (JB)

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